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Bribri

INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS

VOL. VI No. 3

A SERIES OF PUBLICATIONS RELATING TO THE AMERICAN ABORIGINES

NOTES ON THE BRIBRI OF COSTA RICA

BY

ALANSON SKINNER

NEW YORK
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN,
HEYE FOUNDATION,
1920

[p.37]

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NOTES ON THE BRIBRI OF COSTA RICA

BY

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NOTES ON THE BRIBRI OF COSTA RICA

By ALANSON SKINNER

INTRODUCTION

BELONGING to the Chibchan linguistic stock are the Bribri Indians, a small but primitive tribe inhabiting the mountainous district watered by the eastern branches of the Telirí river near the central southern boundary of Costa Rica and extending into northern Panama. They have been visited by a number of observers, including Dr William M. Gabb[1] (whose valuable account we have not hesitated to quote extensively) and Dr Henry Pittier de Fabrega.[2]

The writer spent the months of March and April, 1917, in collecting among these Indians for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, at which time the

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114 following data and most of the specimens illustrated were gathered. His headquarters were at Suretka, then the terminus of the United Fruit Company's railroad, running inland from Bocas del Toro, Panama. From Suretka the Teliri was crossed by dugout canoe, and the Bribri were reached by horseback over the jungle trails leading to their small and widely scattered settlements on the Teliri, Uren, and Coen rivers.

000 The writer wishes to acknowledge the courtesy and assistance of the local agents of the United Fruit Company at Suretka, of Señor Alejo Jimenez, Governor of the Talamanca district, whose hospitality and courtesy were unlimited, and to his own wife, the late Gladys M. Skinner, whose interest and zeal led her to endure the dangers and hardships of the Talamancan forests, and who personally collected many of the specimens herein described. The thanks of the Museum are due also to the United States National Museum for a photograph of a costume collected by Dr Gabb which is reproduced herein.

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CULTURAL POSITION AND ORGANIZATION

The Bribri, according to Sapper,[3] Brinton,[4] Thomas and Swanton,[5] and Pittier,[2a] belong to the South American rather than to the Mexican and North American culture group. According to Pittier, the tribe is divided into two groups, the Tubor-uak[6] and the Kork-uak or Djbar-uak. These moieties were exogamous and matrilineal, and were divided into the following clans:

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TUBOR-UAK

Suritz-uak, Deer clan.
Dutz-uak, Bird clan.
Bokir-uak.
Dojk-uak.
Sark-uak, Monkey clan.
Dogdi-uak, Snail-shell-River clan.
Orori-uak, Ravine-of-the-Arari-River clan.
Kugdi-uak, Ravine-of-the-Uren-River clan.
Tkiut-uak, Flea-house-site clan.
Duri-uak, Bird-ravine clan.
Arau-uak, Thunder-house clan.
Urijk-uak, Ant-eating-Bear clan.

KORK-UAK, OR DJBAR-UAK

Djbar-uak.
Di-u-uak, Water-house clan.
Tkbiri-uak, Snake-ravine clan.
Kos-uak, Precipice clan.

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614 Kipirjk-uak, Edible fruit of a vine clan.
Amu-kir-uak, Agave-patch clan.
616 Tsiru-ru-uak, Ripe chocolatē-bean clan.
Uni-uak.
Sibri-uak, Forked post water or ravine clan.
Dauibri-uak, Ravine clan.
Amuk-uak, Agave-patch clan.
Akter-uak, Rocky-place clan.
Kur-ki-uak, Name of place at the headwaters of the Uren clan.
Kacha-ut-uak, Achiote clan.
Bobri-uak, Name of a place at the headwaters of the Uren clan.

776 Pittier, who has published a brief paper on the folklore of the Bribri and the Brunka,[2b] states that their primitive supreme god was named *Sibú*, and was surrounded by secondary divinities called *Sörkura*, *Jâburu*, and *Surá*, some of them good, others evil, both eternally tricking each other. 773 All men were born from seeds, over which the deities fought. The sacred seeds were kept in baskets which *Sibú* gave into the care of the benevolent gods. The evil deities, however, continually sought for the seeds, and this was the origin of a series of adventures which are still narrated by the surviving pagan Bribri. The skunk is the trickster of Bribri mythology.

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SKINNER—BRIBRI

BRIBRI DWELLING WITHOUT SIDES
A bowlder used as a metate is shown in the foreground

[facing p. 47]

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Gabb[8] speaks of three classes of shamans—the *usékara*, or "high priest"; the *tsúgur* (*tsuku*), who has charge of the ceremonies for the dead; and the *awa*, doctor or sorcerer, who cures diseases and controls the rain. He says that these latter treat diseases by making passes over the body of the patient with a sloth, opossum, alligator, or even a chicken. Their powers are based on the magic potency of calculi declared to be extracted from the viscera of animals. They bleed their patients with small lancets and give a counter irritant by beating the affected part with nettle leaves.

Polygyny was practised in Gabb's time. The husband, he says, went to live with his father-in-law, or, if not, he bought his release with presents of live-stock in lieu of his services.

MATERIAL CULTURE

Habitations.—Several native types of dwellings still survive among the Bribri. The more usual variety is sideless, rectangular or oval in ground-plan, with a convex or

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SKINNER—BRIBRI

A BRIBRI "KING'S HOUSE OR PALENQUE." THE FIGURE AT THE LEFT IS RAMON, THE LAST BRIBRI "KING"

[pacing p. 48]

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342 angular roof of thatched plantain leaves. These lodges vary from twenty to forty feet in length, averaging thirty feet, and from the ground to the apex of the roof-ridge they are eight to ten feet high. In general appearance they closely resemble the houses of the Florida Seminole, but usually lack the sleeping platforms of the latter (pl. 1).

Some houses are provided with floors about four feet from the ground, which generally are made of splints of palm or other wood, lashed with lianas to a framework of beams. Such floors afford an uncertain and yielding footing to a heavy person. Generally the floor covers only a portion of the ground area, an open space being left at one end to accommodate the fireplace, which is situated on the hard-beaten earth. The raised floor is reached by a short, log ladder, the steps of which are closely spaced notches. [352] Hammocks of native make swing from post to post across the lodge above this floor. Sometimes the floor is encompassed by a loose wall of sticks, set up vertically and [231] bound together, the intervening space be-

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tween floor and earth being used as a pig-pen or a chicken-pen,] while the Indians place their hammocks near the fire at the floorless end of the dwelling. /

/ This floorless end of the lodge frequently has a small, quadrangular enclosure made of small sticks lashed together, in which are kept [the culinary utensils, especially the great, pointed-based, pottery chicha jars, which are tied to the side-posts of the pen and are propped with stones to keep them upright (fig. 1). [The floor here is also cumbered with the firelogs, radiating like the spokes of a wheel, with the fire at the middle.] [Calabashes for water or for the preparation of cacao] lie without order on the ground. Generally in this quarter one may see also [the great, flat-topped, natural, river bowlder (which takes the place of the old-time carved stone metate), and the round pebble which serves as a mano] \ One such large bowlder, possibly a drift rock, was seen in the middle of a trail, well out in the jungle and far from any habitation. The Bribri women still went there to grind their corn, for on several occasions traces

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[231]
[415]
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[415]
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412 of fresh meal were seen on its surface. A similar bowlder mortar may be seen in the foreground in pl. 1.

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FIG. 1.—Method of supporting a chicha jar.

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354 In the two circular houses of chiefs that still remained, the arrangement of household furnishings was more promiscuous, but in

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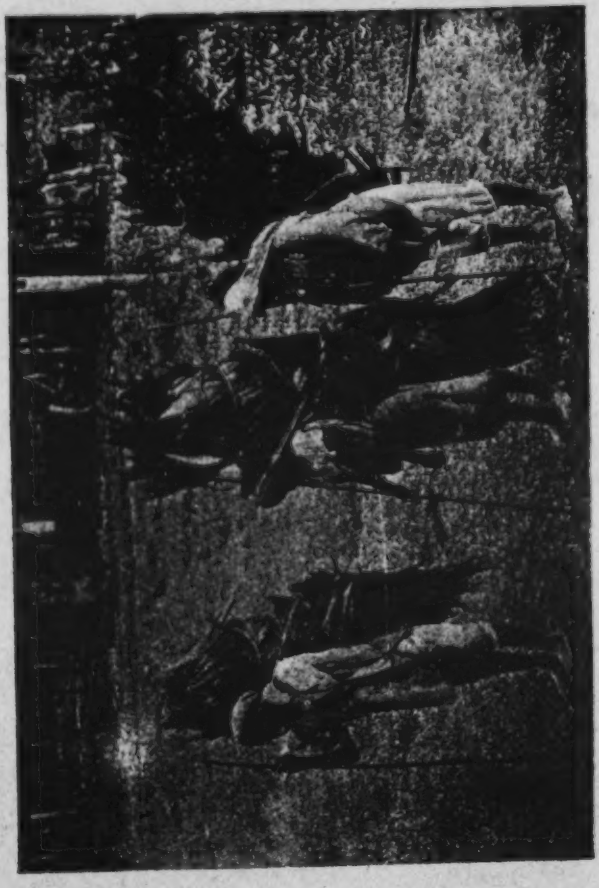
Pl. III



SKINNER—BRIBRI

CARRYING PALM-LEAVES BY MEANS OF THE BURDEN STRAP

[facing p. 51]

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Bribri

both cases the fireplace was opposite the door, near the side, and not in the middle. 342 352 [354]

From the beams and the roof of the ordinary Bribri house are suspended carrying bags and baskets in which are stored calabashes and other utensils, while bows, arrows, and blowguns are held in crude racks or stuck in the thatch. Under the angle of the roof is often a rude attic, made of rough-hewn plank flooring, on which rests one or more great, cylindrical, corn receptacles, or granaries, of bark, and nearby one is likely to see a string or two of braided corn.

Sometimes a long, goblet-shaped, wooden drum, with an iguana-skin head, a number of circular pieces of iguana-skin for fresh drum-heads, or a cluster of several drums, may swing from a rafter at one side; or one may observe plumes of macaws, and the paws, flesh, or skin of jaguars and armadillos, hanging freely or tucked in a woven *chákara*, or bag, to be used as medicine. Again, but rarely, these may be accompanied with a shaman's small gourd rattle with a bone handle. Tame parrots, parra- 352 534 000

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231 Tame parrots, parrakeets, macaws, and other birds, or mammals, such as monkeys, screech at the visitor from a safe retreat in the rafters, and there is always a host of dogs to guard against.

342 Another, now uncommon, type of lodge is oval or round, a trifle larger and flatter than the form described. Its outer wall is only about four feet high, loosely built of sticks set up vertically and tied together. This type of lodge is light inside, but its sides are not tight; it has no raised floor, and no smoke-hole. The kitchen is always some distance from the door, and though never in the center of the building, is often at the end opposite from the entrance.

352 516 [532] In all the forms of lodges observed, there are many four-legged stools, sometimes roughly carved to imitate tortoises, and very long benches. The Bribri, when at home, never squat on the bare ground like their North American relatives, but each member of the family, including the youngest child, has his own seat.

342 The last type of Bribri house to be mentioned is the most striking. It is called today a "*palenque*," or "king's house," by

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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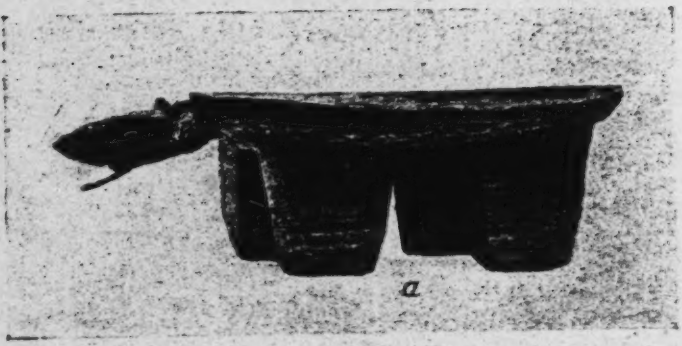

STOOLS CARVED TO REPRESENT THE TORTOISE

(Length: *a*, 11"; *b*, 12¼")

[Facing p. 53]

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Bribri

the natives. In the spring of 1917 only two examples were to be found, and one of these had been abandoned and was falling into decay. These houses are great conical structures, about a hundred feet in circumference, consisting of thatched walls rising from the ground to a sharp point, forty or fifty feet above, which is capped by an inverted kettle to prevent leakage during inclement weather (pl. II). The doorway is high enough to admit a man without stooping, and is protected by a roofed but sideless vestibule. Inside all is dark, for no light is admitted except through the door, and the interior is thoroughly smoke-blackened. A rectangular platform, about ten feet square, made of puncheons supported by vertical beams, supports the bark granaries and some pottery vessels, together with a small supply of pounded clay for blowgun pellets. The sides are festooned with weapons and utensils, while pigs enter freely and root about among the stools and benches. Piles of palm-leaves around the sides indicate beds. We were told that

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LARGE CARRYING BAG

(Depth, 24 inches)

[facing p. 54]

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342 [592] We were told that these great houses were at one time inhabited by groups of related families.

Dr Gabb,[9] writing nearly fifty years ago, presented the following account of his observations regarding the houses of the Bribri of his time:

"The houses of the Bri-bris are usually circular, from thirty to fifty feet in diameter, and about the same in height. They are composed of long poles, reaching from the ground to the apex. These rest on a ring of withes or vines, tied in bundles, eight or ten inches thick, and resting on a series of upright crotched posts, set in the ground in a circle about a third smaller than the outer circumference of the house. Above this ring, if the house is large, are one or two more, according to its size, not resting on posts, but tied to the sloping poles. The whole is thickly thatched with palm leaves, and finished at the apex by an old earthen jar, to stop the leaks. There is but one aperture to the house, and this is a large, squarely cut door, left on one side. Over the door there is sometimes a little shed, to keep the rain out. The interior is always very dark. Sometimes, among the Bri-bris, instead of building the house in a circular form, it is elongated and has a ridge-pole, but the ends are rounded, and the door is in one of the ends."

482 The method of transporting the bundles of platanillo leaves used in house-building

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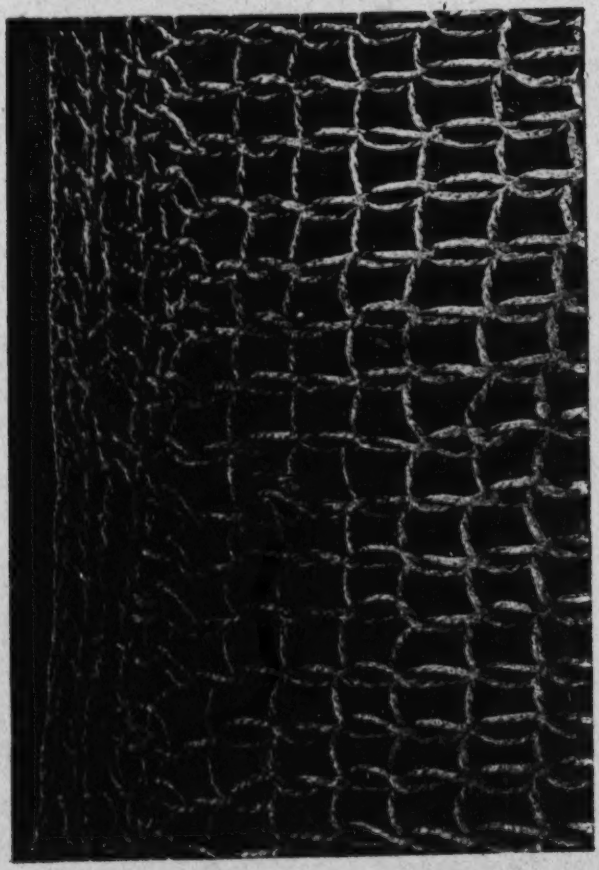
286 PL VI



DETAIL OF BAG SHOWN IN PLATE V

SKINNER—BRIBRI

[facing p. 55]

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is shown in pl. III, from a photograph kindly furnished by Prof. M. H. Saville. 482

Drying platforms for cacao, and outside granaries, built close to the houses, are found everywhere. 343

Gardens.—Many Bribri lodges are surrounded by yards enclosed with small bough fences, within which nothing is grown; but every home has its small banana or plantain plantation and its grove of cacao trees, sometimes very large and old, with occasional lime trees or yampi plants. These trees usually grow close to the dwelling, and often surround it. Corn fields are commonly seen, and calabash trees are always in evidence. Cotton plants, growing either singly or in small clumps, are sometimes found near the houses. 241

Household Utensils.—As above stated, every member of a family is provided with a low stool or seat, hewn from a block of wood. These seats (fig. 2) are round, square, or oblong, and the long, round, tapering legs of some examples suggest the stone metates found at Las Mercedes. There can be no doubt that the custom of 352 171

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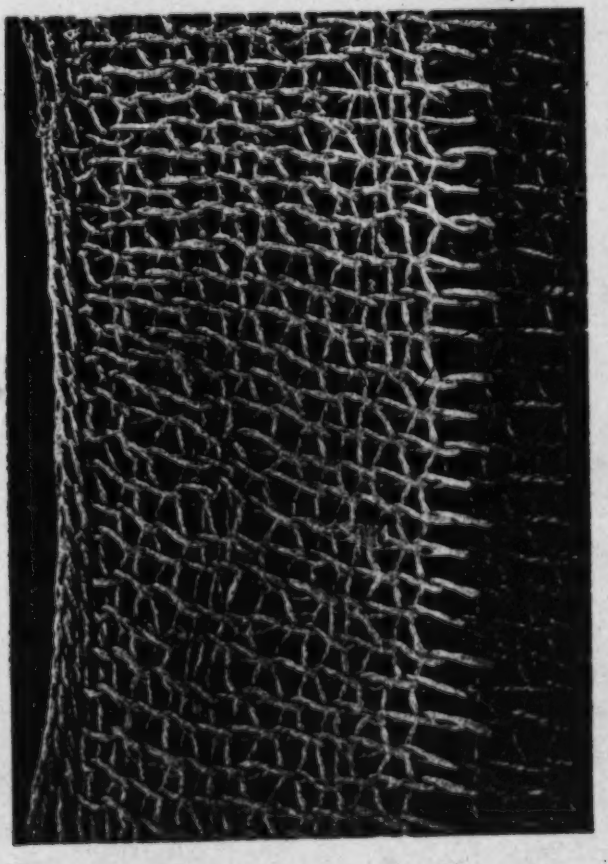
286 PL. VII



DETAIL OF A CARRYING BAG

SKINNER—BRIBRI

[facing p. 56]

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using stools is an ancient one in Costa Rica, and that these seats seem to be but degenerate survivals of elaborately carved stone stools, such as those taken from the graves at Las Mercedes and Anita Grande. They may bear some relation to the *duhos* of the West Indies.

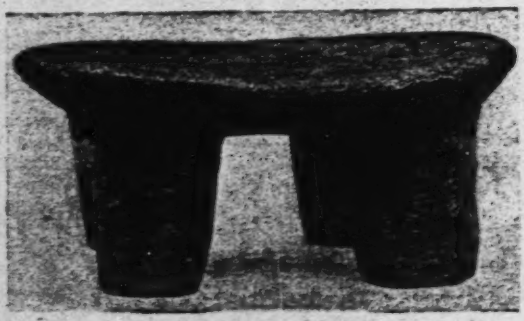

FIG. 2.—Wooden stool (length 13½ in.).

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The writer was fortunate enough to obtain some modern Bribri seats crudely hewn to represent tortoises (pl. IV), while one example had, instead of the usual legs, supports of wood carved in crudely rectangular figures (fig. 3) that recall the fine stone lattice-work found in the graves.

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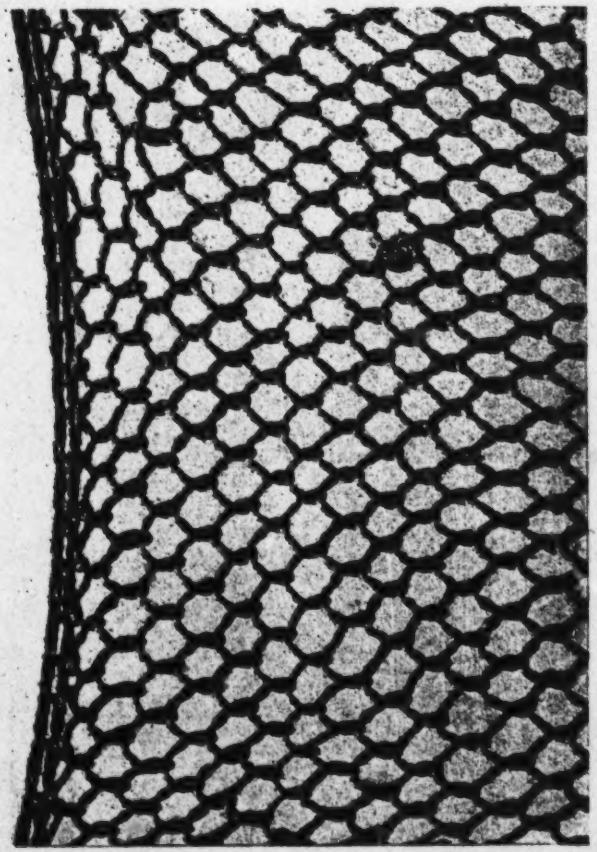
PL. VIII



SKINNER—BRIBRI

DETAIL OF SINGLE-LOOP CARRYING BAG

[facing p. 57]

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The seats vary in size from diminutive forms used by children to benches six to ten feet long, narrow, with square ends and clumsy feet. Some of the children's seats have been used as toys. Pl. IV, *a*, illustrating a seat shaped like a turtle, still has about the neck a portion of the fiber string by which its little owner dragged it about;

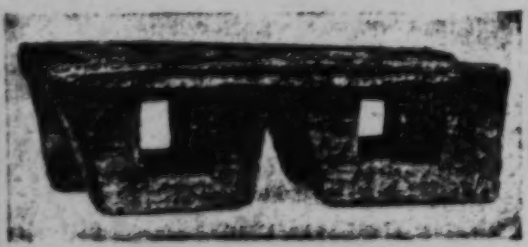

FIG 3.—Stool with unusual supports (length 13½ in.).

and, to add to the realism of its play, the child had also fitted the ill-smelling carapace of a freshly killed tortoise of the family *Chelydra* over the top of this stool.

Hammocks and Beds.—Large, handsomely netted hammocks of string made from native fibers are often used for sleeping, each member of the family having his own. They are

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BAG WITH DOUBLE POCKET FOR CARRYING BLOWGUN PELLETS
(Depth of bag, 7½ inches)

[facing p. 58]

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made usually in two sizes, only both of which are more capacious than ours. A large example in the collection of the Museum is made in coarse diagonal net, the strands passing over two and under two.

Especially in such houses as are provided with raised floors, one finds beds in addition to hammocks, the groundwork of which is usually a coarse, plain blanket made of a

[287]

heavy bark cloth, or tapa, about a yard square.

Bags.—In abundant evidence in every house are the carrying bags, in varying sizes, consisting of coiled work without foundation, and manufactured of cotton or sisal fiber. These bags are made with bone

[412]

needles, fashioned somewhat like the bone netting-needles of the Central Algonkians, and are, as Gabb says, "meshed like our fiber nets." The bags are sometimes double, one being netted within another, and are often ornamented with a few encircling, parallel bands in black or red, or both, colored with native bark dyes. The bags are

[482]

called *chákara*. All are furnished with a head- or breast-strap, woven of one piece with the bag.

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BAG FOR BLOWGUN PELLETS
(Depth, 6 inches)

[facing p. 59]

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with the bag. They are by no means so handsome as the bright-colored bags made by the Valiente Indians nearer the coast, and the Bribri complain that their manufacture will soon be a lost art, except among those dwelling in the remote forest fastnesses, whence the greater supply now comes. Nevertheless, at present the bags are plentiful, and abundant specimens of numerous weaves were secured, ranging in size from tiny pockets, intended to contain clay blowgun pellets, to large receptacles for transporting plantains.

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Pl. v represents a large carrying bag, the ground color of which is white, traversed by two transverse horizontal bands in brown. It is of the same technique as the specimen shown in Mason's work,[10] which the author describes as "a coiled carrying bag from Chiriqui, Colombia, and is a type of an enormous amount of ware to be found in Middle America . . . . and is called in this monograph coiled work without foundation . . . . the twine constituting the fabric interlocks with the stitch underneath and makes a complete revolu-

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[171]

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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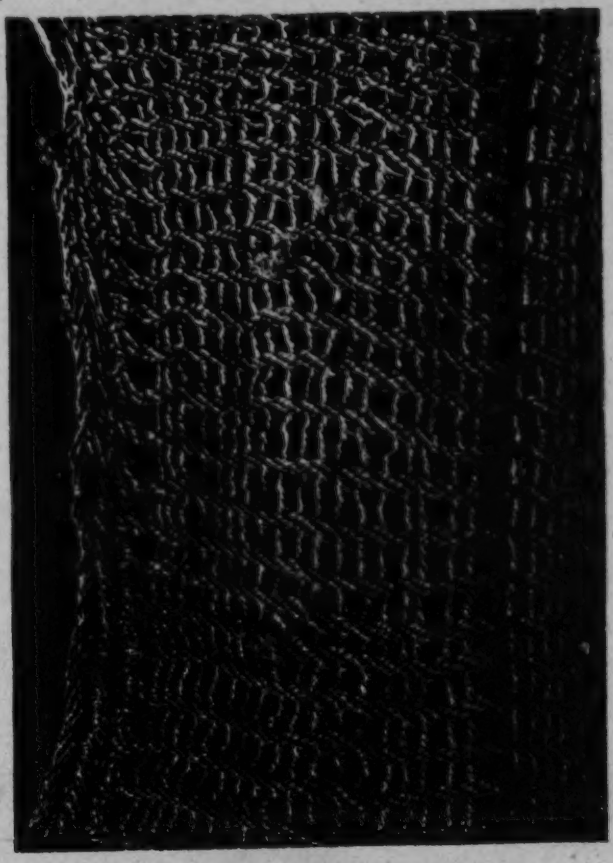
286 PL. XI



SKINNER—BRIBRI

DETAIL OF WOVEN CARRYING BAG WITH RIBBED APPEARANCE

[facing p. 60]

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286 tion, catching the next stitch, and so on. Without definite information on the subject, it is believed that in making these bags some sort of a gauge is used by the weaver—a small stick which may be slipped along as the work proceeds."

The edge of the bag mentioned above is shown in detail in pl. VI and is made similarly to the rest of the receptacle, except that, instead of looping into the coil directly above it, each loop passes over two loops to the right, then returns, passing two more to the left before interlocking with it. The border is composed of a double row of such netting. The carrying strap is made of a 22-strand braid, netted diagonally.

Pl. VII represents the detail of a large carrying bag, white in ground color, with three bands of decoration, each being a double bar, brown above and gray beneath. The process resembles that of the preceding (pl. VI), except that each loop, instead of passing through one loop, goes through two, and crosses itself on two more loops in the row below. The next rows above and below alternate the grouping of the pairs of loops.

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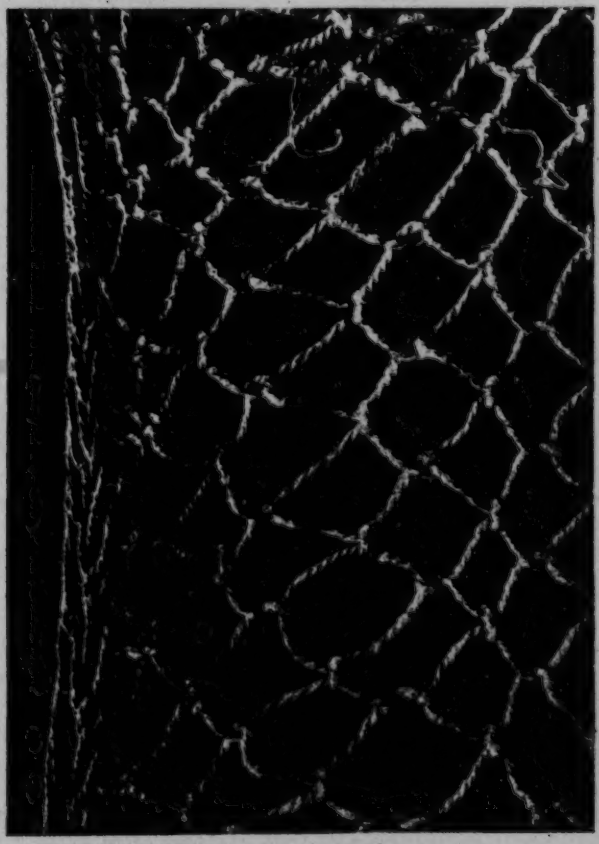
28 PL. XII



SKINNER—BRIBRI

DETAIL OF A BAG OF LOOP-WORK ALTERNATING WITH KNOTTED NET

[facing p. 61]

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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The edge is similar to that shown in pl. VI, except that it is a single row. The strap for carrying is only an 18-strand net. 286

Pl. VIII shows the detail of a small bag, woven like the last, except that each loop connects singly with its neighbor, and does not take in groups of two, as in pl. VII.

Pl. IX represents a small, double-pocket bag woven like that shown in pl. VI. The bag is intended for carrying clay blowgun pellets, with a division reserved for small game. A bone pellet gauge is attached to the edge. The edge differs from the others in that it is made up of two strands, and the strap for carrying is 20-ply. 286 415

Pl. X shows a small, elongate receptacle, designed for carrying blowgun pellets. The carrying strap is made similarly to all the others, but is of two-strand net. The bag is of coil without foundation work.

The bag of which a detail is illustrated in pl. XI is based on the coil without foundation process, except that, instead of alternating the pairs of loops, they are directly opposite throughout. The cord of which the 286

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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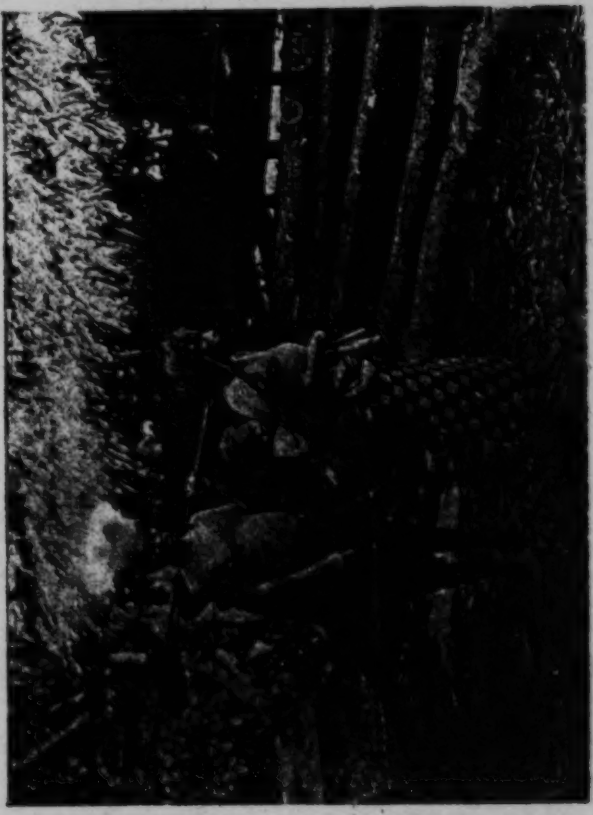
PL. XIII



SKINNER—BRIBRI

BRIBRI FAMILY TRAVELLING, SHOWING BURDEN BASKET IN USE.
ALSO THE METHOD OF CARRYING A CHILD.

[facing p. 62]

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286 bag is made is tighter and more closely twisted, giving the netting a ribbed appearance.

Pl. XII exhibits the detail of a large bag of simple loop-work alternating with knotted net, the looping occurring only near the top and bottom.

237 282 224 415 Another form of small bag is made from the scrotum of a buck, stuffed with ashes while still fresh, and dried. Bags of this nature were seen worn about the necks of small children, and were probably filled with hunting charms. They could not be purchased, as they were regarded as possessing magic properties.

285 415 *Baskets.*—Bags and baskets of open weave and of sizes ranging from that of a cup to those as big as a washtub, were seen. The latter are used chiefly for carrying burdens or for storage. Besides these baskets and bags, carrying-straps of bark were used, and with these passed over the forehead, as among the forest Indians of northern America, heavy burdens could be transported for long distances. Pl. XIII illustrates the use of a carrying basket and

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also the method of carrying a child on the back of a Bribri woman when traveling.

A specimen of a handsome type of basket, made of split palm-leaves or of cane, fashioned in a diagonal twilled technique like some of the baskets of the Alibamu, Choc-

FIG. 4. Basket for holding trinkets (diam. 9¼ in.).

taw, and other Indians of our Gulf states, is illustrated in fig. 4. Such baskets are used for holding trinkets, and are not common.

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Calabashes.—No utensils are more common among the Bribri than vessels made of calabashes. Gourds nearly globular in shape, with a small, round hole cut in the apex (fig. 5, *a*), serve for water bottles, while the simplest form of dish or cup is a

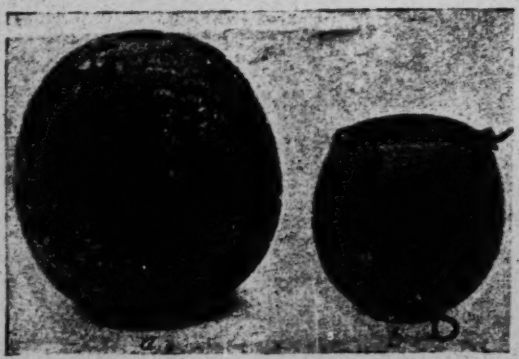

FIG. 5.—Calabashes used as receptacles.

half gourd without decoration. These, or coconut-shells, are sometimes pierced at opposite sides and are furnished with a fiber cord for suspension or carrying (fig. 5, *b*). Thus equipped, they are used as salt dishes.

[531] These gourd receptacles are frequently ornamented with rudely incised designs.

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SKINNER—BRIBRI

Pl. XIV

[facing p. 15]

a

b

CALABASH SIEVES
(Diameter of rim: *a*, 5½ in.; *b*, 8 in.)

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Fig. 6, *b*, represents a bowl or cup marked with four T and Y shaped figures, while *a* of the same illustration shows a stellar design with a divided triangle on one side and a T figure on the other. 531 415

Fig. 7 is the most elaborately ornamented calabash bowl collected; it is decorated with [532]

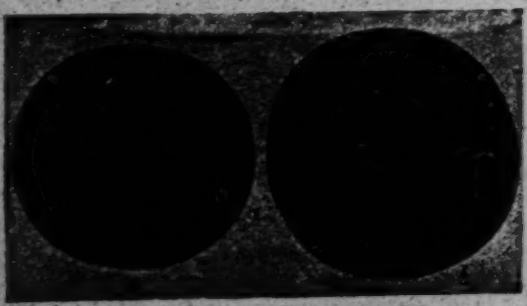

FIG. 6.—Decorated calabashes.

the figure of a steamship, anchored at both ends, and furnished with two nondescript flags, several fairly complicated geometrical figures, the date *1 Mayo*, and the initials *R. M.* Although not obtained from him, it is possible that this vessel may have been made by Ramon, the "king."

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Another type of vessel is a sieve, or colander, made from the shell of a calabash, shown in pl. XIV, *a*. The rim is left intact, but the rest of the utensil is riddled with holes, though a suggestion of a pattern is

[531]
[532]

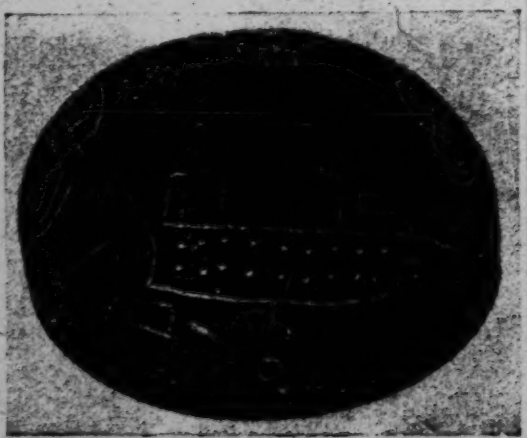

FIG. 7.—Decorated calabash receptacle.

left untouched. The rim bears some crude, etched figures, including one resembling a conventionalized butterfly. The calabash, where cracked, is laced together with fiber string passed through two holes bored in

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EARTHENWARE JAR FOR CHICHA
(Height, 16 in.)

[facing p. 67]

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opposite sides of the break. Pl. XIV, *b*, shows another utensil, similar to the last, but shallower. These objects are used as sieves for corn flour.

Pottery.—Possibly the most interesting of all Bribri household articles are the huge pottery jars (pl. XV, XV, *a*) used in fermenting *chicha*, the native intoxicant. According to information given by the Indians, these vessels are made of selected clay, which is ground on a metate and mixed with crushed, burnt stone, or coarse sand. The clay is then dampened and made into rolls, and the vessels are built up, coil by coil, and the rolls smoothed. On some abandoned camp-sites, large potsherds, broken so that they plainly showed the coils as well as the tempering, were found. After being shaped and smoothed, the vessels are dried slowly in the shade for several days; then one vessel at a time is taken outdoors, wood is heaped over them, and they are fired.

In shape these vessels differ entirely from the pottery found in the graves at Las Mercedes, but resemble the pointed-base Algonkian jars of the Atlantic coast of North America

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415 North America. The Indians relate a tradition that without pointed bases the jars would not fire well. Several variations in form were seen. These are nearly all very large, averaging at least three feet in height, and of a capacity of many gallons. Smaller vessels are unusual. None of the vessels observed bore the slightest ornamentation.

[322] *Wooden Utensils.*—On several occasions, large, round, wooden bowls, shaped like shallow basins, were observed. They were clumsy and thick, and not to be compared with the fine specimens made by many of the North American tribes.

Pl. XVI represents a very simple dish, made by folding the ends of a strip of the leaf of the platanillo and sewing them together.

412 *Mortars and Pestles.*—Fig. 8 shows a type of heavy horizontal mortar frequently seen in the Indian camps. These are made of great logs of mahogany or of other hard wood, sometimes as much as ten or twelve feet long, with the cavity for the corn hewn in one side. The wooden pestles used with

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LARGE POTTERY JAR FOR BREWING CHICHA
(Height, 31 inches)

facing p. 69

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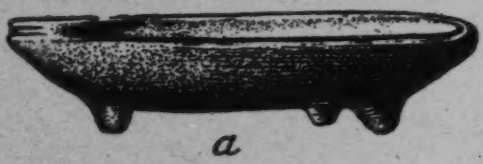
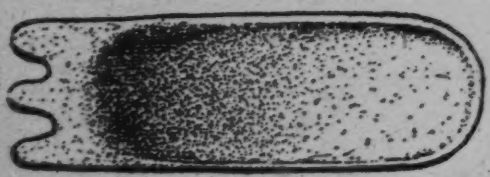
these mortars have double ends and a slender, central shaft, four to six feet in length. 412

FIG. 8.—Long mortar of wood.



a



b

FIG. 9.—Metate (side and top views). (Length, 18 in.)

Metates and Manos.—At the present time the metate is simply a flat-topped river bowlder, generally of several hundredweight,

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

412 shaped only by use. Cacao and maize are
[252] ground upon the surface of the metate with a muller or mano, which is another, though smaller, natural waterworn bowlder.

On abandoned sites near Teliri river some crude three-legged stone metates were found (figs. 9, *a*, *b*, drawn from fragments), pecked from hard scoria. These are inferior to the beautiful "tiger" metates of Las
[173] Mercedes; nevertheless, some of the Bribri believe that these fine metates were used by their ancestors. The Mercedes and Anita Grande sites also yielded some of the plain, three-legged metates, as well as those of the more ornate variety.

411 *Digging Stick or Warclub.*—Pl. XVII, *a*,
412 represents a digging stick of narrow, paddle shape, made of "cacique" wood. While the natives said that this specimen was once used as an agricultural implement, some of them also declared that it had been employed as a warclub. They referred to the stick as a "macana," in which is recognized an implement equivalent to the Nahuatl *macuahuitl*, a warclub in which blades or spikes of obsidian were embedded.

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PL. XVI

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DISH MADE OF A PLATANILLO LEAF

SKINNER—BRIBRI

[facing p. 71]

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Bribri

The late Theodoor de Booy once called the writer's attention to the fact that in certain of the West India islands planting dibbles were used as warclubs, and according to Fewkes, while every warclub among the Porto Rico Indians was not a dibble, every dibble was a warclub.[11] Our specimen bears upon its broad end the striation caused by contact with the earth, and on its side hacks and scars of sidewise blows as though it had seen use as a quarter staff. The handle shows a figure which seems to be a property mark.

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[422]

Gabb[12] says:

"In their quarrels, a stick is used over six feet long, nearly an inch thick and about two inches wide, and made of the same wood as the bows, arrows, and planting sticks. It is very heavy, and is grasped by the fingers and thumbs of both hands in such a manner that they are guarded from a blow. They guard and strike an 'over-blow,' always holding by both hands . . . . During the wars between the Bri-bris and Tiri-bis at the beginning of this century, the principal arm used was an iron-headed lance fastened to a shaft barely four feet long. For defense, round shields were carried on the arm, made of the thickest part of the hide of the tapir."

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Clothing.—Many of the Bribri state that formerly their garments were made of beaten bark cloth, resembling the blankets which they still use for bedding, but thinner, and decorated with painted designs. These have now passed out of use, and except for blanket skirts (pl. XVIII, *b*) woven of cotton, with plain band designs in native blue dye, the Indians have adopted the cloth of civilization, roughly made into garments approximating those of their white neighbors. Regarding their dress, Gabb[13] says:

291

"Fashions in dress change even among savages, at least as civilization approaches. Formerly, the dress of the men consisted only of a breech cloth. It was made of *mastate*, or bark cloth, about a foot wide and seven or eight feet long, tapering at one end. The cloth is made by taking the inner bark of either the India rubber or another tree and beating it with a roughened stick [pl. XIX, *c*] over a log. This loosens the fiber, and renders it soft and flexible. It is then carefully washed until all the gummy matter is washed out. After drying it is rubbed a little and becomes soft and smooth to the feel. To apply the breech-cloth, the wide end is held against the belly, the remainder being passed between the legs; it is then wound around the waist and the point tucked in; the broad end then falls over in front for about a foot long, like

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[532]

VARIOUS IMPLEMENTS

a, Planting dibble and war club, length 5'; *b*, Cacique stick, length 4' 7"; *c*, Blowgun, length 6' 10"; *d*, Bow, length 4' 10"

[Facing page 73]

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Bribri

an apron. When cotton cloth is used, it is simply caught up in front and behind under a cotton belt, with a similar apron in front. Sometimes, for warmth, a shirt of mastate was worn; simply a strip with a hole in the middle for the head, and tied under each arm with a piece of string. Now many of the men have discarded the breech-cloth, and wear cotton shirts and pantaloons, buying the stuff from the traders and sewing them themselves. Others, not so far advanced, wear a shirt and a breech-cloth. Formerly, the hair was worn as long as it would grow, sometimes rolled up and tied behind in a knot. Some of the conservatives still stick to the old style and follow this custom yet; others of the men wear their hair in two plaits, but the majority cut it to a moderate length, and either confine it by a bright colored handkerchief tied round the head in a roll, or wear a hat. 291

"The dress of the women originally consisted of a simple petticoat (*bana*) of *mastate*. Very few now use this material, preferring the softer cotton cloth of the traders. The favorite color is a dark indigo blue, with figures five or six inches across, in white. The *bana* is a simple strip of cloth wrapped round the hips, with the ends overlapping about six inches in front. It is suspended at the waist by a belt, and reaches more or less, to the knees. When on a journey in rainy or muddy weather, I have seen a simple substitute. It was made of a couple of plantain leaves, stripped to a coarse fringe, and wound round the waist by the midribs. With nothing above or below it, it is the nearest approach to a fig leaf one can imagine. Only of late have

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Bribri

291 the women begun to wear anything above the waist, and even now it is considered hardly necessary. Some of the women wear a sort of loose little jacket, or chemise, very low in the neck and short in the sleeves, that barely reaches the waist and only partly conceals the bosom. I have frequently seen a woman, in the habit of wearing one of these, either take it off entirely, or fan herself with it, if warm, in the presence of a number of men, and evidently innocent of improper intentions, and unaware that she was [834] doing anything remarkable. With this scanty dress, I must do these people the justice of saying that they are remarkably modest, both men and women. . . . .

301 237 "For ornaments all wear necklaces; the favorite ones are made of teeth, of which those of the tiger are most highly prized. Only the canine teeth are used. Small strings are sometimes made of monkey, coon, or other teeth, but are not much thought of. I have seen one of these made of five strings of tiger teeth, gradually diminishing in size, and covering the entire breast of the wearer. The women rarely, almost never, wear these. If they wear teeth, they are of some very small animal. In place of 301 them, they wear great quantities of glass beads. I have seen fully three pounds of beads around the neck of one old woman. . . . . Even little girls are often so loaded down that the weight must be irksome to them. . . . . On one occasion, I paid a man six dollars, all in Costa Rican quarters, for his month's work. After a few days, I went to his house and saw the entire sum strung on his wife's neck. Shells are some-

WOVEN FABRICS
(*a*, Belt; *b*, Blanket; *c* Headband)

[facing p. 75]

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times, though rarely, used. The men sometimes carry, suspended from the necklace, the shell of a small species of *murex*, with the varices ground off and a hole drilled in it to make a whistle. These are bought in Terraba, and are highly prized. 301 [321] [534]

"The men sometimes wear headdresses made of feathers. The most prized are the white down feathers from under the tail of the large eagle. Others are made of chicken feathers, or are worked in rows of blue, red, black, yellow, &c., from the plumage of small birds. I have seen one headdress made from the hair of the tail of the great ant-eater, in the place of feathers. The feathers are secured vertically to a tape and extend laterally so as to reach from temple to temple, curling over forward at the top, the tape being tied behind, so as to keep the hair in place." 237 301

Gabb observed facial paintings applied by both sexes, but none were seen by the writer. He refers to designs made with the reddish-brown sap of a vine, the commoner designs being squares or parallelograms, about an inch across, on each cheek. These figures were either solid or made up of bars. Another pigment, called annato, was drawn in stripes or bars on the face, or an indigo fruit juice was smeared on the face and body. Tattooing is unknown. 302 [386] [531] [386] [304]

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286 *Weaving.*—Two women's blanket skirts of woven cotton were obtained after considerable search, one of which is shown in pl. XVIII, *b*. As the manufacture of cotton cloth is now said to be a lost art, we must turn again to Gabb[14] for his observations.

"Belts, breech-cloths, cloths for wrapping the bones of the dead, and women's petticoats are woven of cotton. The cotton is raised with 248 no care beyond planting a few seeds and allowing the plants to take care of themselves. They grow to the height of ten or twelve feet and almost every house has a few in its vicinity. The yellow flowers, buds, and open bolls are seen [462] all the year round, together on every tree. The women collect the ripe cotton, pick it from the seeds with their fingers and spin it. The loom 286 is a simple frame of four sticks; the two upright ones are planted in the ground; the other two rudely tied to these. The warp is wrapped around the two horizontal bars and a simple contrivance of threads is arranged to open and reverse it. The thread for the woof wound on slender sticks is then passed through in the usual manner and driven tight by blows of a smooth stick. The process is exceedingly slow [462] and tedious and I have never seen it performed except by the men. The belts are usually two or three inches wide and four or five feet long. Breech-cloths are about four feet long and a 292 little more than a foot wide. The cloths for the 286 dead and the women's petticoats are wider and

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SKINNER—BRIBRI PL. XIX

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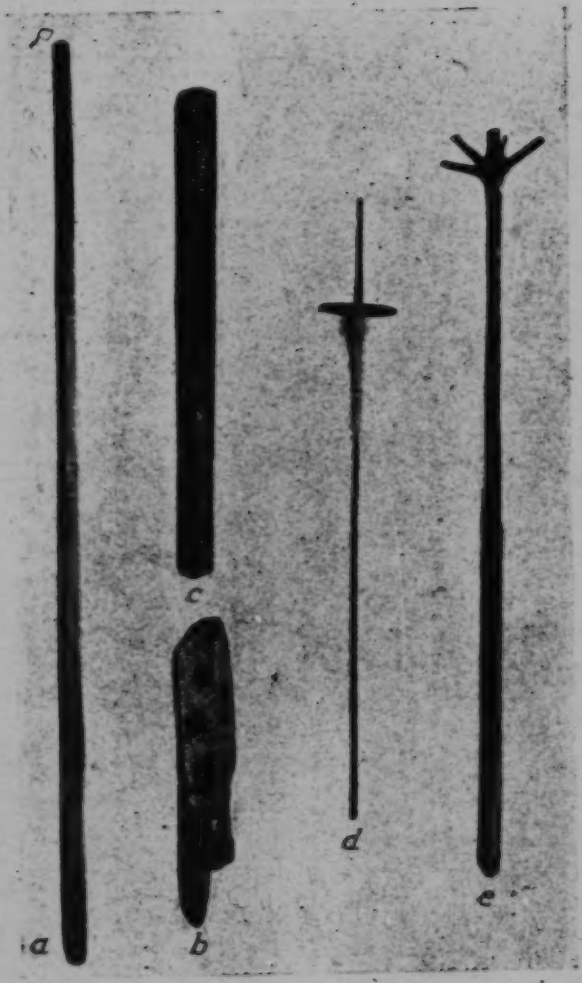

VARIOUS IMPLEMENTS

a, Fire-drill; *b*, Hearth; *c*, Bark-beater; *d*, Spindle; *e*, Cacao stirring stick. (Length of *e*, 26 inches)

[facing p. 72]

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Bribri

a trifle longer. Except for the cloths for the dead, which are woven white and afterwards painted, most of this cotton work is ornamented with colors. Besides native vegetable dyes, the people of Bri-bri buy cotton dyed a dirty purple with the blood of the *murex*. This is procured from the people of Terraba on the Pacific. They also now occasionally buy colored threads of foreign production, especially a rich bluish purple, of which they are particularly fond. All of this weaving is with very coarse thread, nearly as thick as the finer twines used by shopkeepers in the United States for tying small packages. The cloth is consequently coarse in texture and rough in appearance, but closely woven and soft to the feel."

286 [292] [386] [439]

Gabb also speaks of a very large blanket of this material, large enough, he says, to cover a good-sized double bed. A plain blanket of this description was seen by the writer on Coen river.

Besides the blankets, a belt of woven cotton (pl. XVIII, *a*) ornamented with parallel bands of blue and red on the natural white ground, was obtained. It is an old specimen, perhaps the only one that remained among the Bribri. [531]

A head-band of closely woven cotton thread (pl. XVIII, *c*) was purchased of

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286 Ramón, "the king." This is a narrow strip, less than an inch broad and 28½ inches in length; in color it is red, with a blue central band and white stitches on the border. It is a fine piece of native work.

283 Pl. XIX, *d*, illustrates a wooden spindle for cotton thread. A spindle whorl of tortoise-shell from another spindle was also obtained.

301 237 789 778 *Necklaces.*—The Bribri women no longer wear the heavy bead necklaces described by Gabb, although the men still delight in similar ornaments, but made of jaguar teeth. These are especially difficult to obtain, since the Indians seem to have the idea that the possession of one of these ornaments endows the owner with some of the powers of the animal from whose teeth they are made.

301 Pl. XX, *d*, represents one of these ornaments, made of exceptionally large teeth strung on a fiber cord, alternating with small, red-glass trade beads. Fig. *c* of the same plate shows a smaller but more primitive necklace, in which the alternating beads are made of some species of snail-shell,

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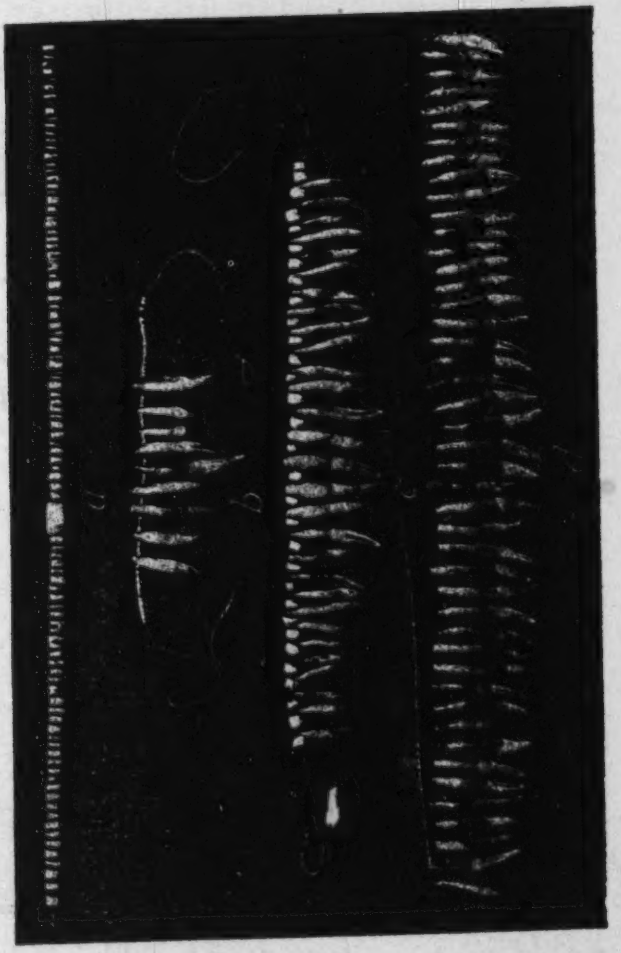

PL. XX

NECKLACES

SKINNER—BRIBRI

facing p. 79

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ground down to form discs. The boring of the teeth in this necklace is also of interest, as the holes are rimmed in from both sides, in an old aboriginal style. The small teeth at the end may be those of monkeys. Pl. xx, *b*, is an amulet of jaguar and other teeth strung with small, white-glass trade beads.

Several children's necklaces of monkey and raccoon teeth were observed, but the writer was not able to obtain any.

Pl. xx, *a*, represents an interesting necklace, composed of shell disc beads ground from a species of conus, and with a single heavy bead as a central piece. Beads of this heavy cylindrical type are valued highly by the Bribri. Ramón exhibited several of them, each of which he valued at the price of a cow, and one massive pink-and-white cylindrical pendant which he valued at two cows. The beads were costly, he said, because they required so much labor to manufacture and the material is not easily acquired. Ramón declared that such beads were the insignia of chiefs, and were more valued by the Indians than the

301 [321]
301 435 [321]

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golden eagles formerly common among them, the latter being much easier to make.

Headdress.—Pl. XXI represents a man's headdress made of the tail-down of an eagle, as described by Gabb. The pure white, fluffy feathers are attached in clusters to a woven cotton head-band of white with red stripes.

Pl. XXII shows another warrior's head-gear, the foundation of which is trade cloth, upon which, in front, are gummed alternate rows of blue and red feathers, with a crest of yellow.

Pl. XXIII, *a*, illustrates an old head-band consisting of a canvas fillet on which are mounted half a dozen long, draggled feathers of the red macaw.

While the Bribri wear no nose or cheek plugs, they say that this custom is still in vogue among some of the neighboring tribes. These ornaments are said to be made of tapir bone, and are three or four inches long, slender and cylindrical. When taken by the Bribri from a slain enemy, they are highly valued as war trophies.

Bark and Fiber Articles.—Besides the

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PL. XXI

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301

MAN'S HEADDRESS

SKINNER—BRIBRI

[facing p. 81]

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Bark and Fiber Articles.—Besides the blankets of beaten bark used for beds and as wrappings for the bones of the dead, the Bribri have burden straps of the same material. These are merely plain bands of tapa. The Indians say the bark is stripped from the trees in sheets, then pounded on a log with a wooden bark-beater. 287

Twisted fiber string and ropes, from several native substances, including agave, are made in varying degrees of fineness. These are used for every purpose, from bag and hammock weaving to tying house-posts and fastening drum-heads, and as cord for their suspension. 283

Weapons.—Besides the digging-stick war-clubs above described, the Bribri declare that in their former wars they used lances, those remembered being about six feet long, of hardwood tipped with iron. Gabb reports obtaining one of these, and also a small, round shield of tapir hide—another obsolete article. 411

Pl. XVII, *d*, represents a bow, 4 ft. 10 in. in length, and, as usual, furnished with a fiber string. The arrows are compound, having a reed shaft and a hardwood fore-

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

411

FIG. 10.—Bird arrow.

shaft, which in many cases is merely pointed but not barbed. The foreshaft is about the same length as the main shaft, and the two parts are bound together at their junction with twine of cotton or other fiber and gummed over at three places to prevent splitting. The butt, which has no nock, is also bound with twine.

Pl. XXIV, *d*, illustrates an arrow with a metal point, used in killing deer and other large game. The foreshaft is quadrangular in cross-section. Blunt bird-arrows are shown in pl. XXIV, *e*, and in fig. 10, but the latter has a short knob on the end.

Fig. *c* of the same plate represents a type of war arrow used in former times. The head is of pilam wood, multibarbed, and triangular in cross-section. Wounds from these, especially if in the abdomen, were much

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Pl. xxii

MAN'S HEADDRESS MADE OF ROWS OF FEATHERS ALTERNATING IN COLORS

[facing p. 83]

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Bribri

dreaded, since the Indians say they could not withdraw the arrow without pulling out the victim's intestines on the barbs. 411

Pl. XXIV, *b*, shows an arrow resembling the preceding, except that the foreshaft is round in cross-section and is barbed only on one side. It is a form used in fishing. 227 411

Pl. XXIV, *a*, is also a fish arrow, for taking small species. It has a foreshaft of cane split into four prongs, which open on contact with the water and spread out to encompass the fish. Pl. XXVIII represents a party of Bribri men in semi-costume ready to shoot fish.

Blowguns.—While not nearly so common among the Bribri as bows and arrows, blowguns are still to be seen in many houses. These weapons are made by removing the core of some pithy stalk about 6 feet long. The bore is rather large, and through it are shot clay pellets (pl. XXV, *a*) instead of darts. The outer surface of the weapon is covered with a heavy black gum, the same as that used on the arrows, but thickly applied. On all complete blowguns two shell beads are set parallel, close together, 411

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411 about six inches from the muzzle, the end farthest from the user. These are sights, explained by the Indians as "eyes, so that the gun can see where to shoot" (pl. XVII, *c*). Of course these blowguns are suitable only for securing small game.

As an accessory to the blowgun, the Bribri carry small bags intended to hold the earthen pellets used as ammunition. Pl. IX [415] shows one of these bags, which has two compartments, one for the pellets, the other for game. Attached to it is a bone gauge, used [413] to reduce the pellets to the proper caliber for use. Pl. X exhibits another small, narrow, but deep bag for blowgun pellets.

Gabb speaks of a small, straight, heavy [413] piece of bone carried by the hunters and used to drive obstructions out of the tube by its own weight, in case of stoppage. None of these were seen by the writer.

In making blowgun pellets, special clay is obtained. That seen in use among the Bribri was gray, but some balls in the possession of a Cabecar hunter were made of red earth. The clay is brought to camp and dried, then ground fine on a stone mortar,

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HEADDRESS OF MACAW-FEATHERS AND FIRE-FAN OF HAWK-FEATHERS

[facing p. 85]

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when it is moistened and made into a large ball, which is dried and put away in some secure place, such as the granary platform or a corner under the eaves, until required. When needed, a portion is pared off with a machete on a platanillo leaf, a little water is added from a calabash, and the pellets are worked up from the damp clay with the fingers and gauged with a bone cylinder. The pellets are then sun-dried, but not baked. It was observed that the hunter usually carries a few balls in his mouth, ready for use, and these are expelled through the tube from the tip of the tongue. 411

Fire-making.—In some of the more remote Bribri camps, matches were unknown, the method of making fire being by means of a wooden hand drill (pl. XIX, *a*, *b*). The entire apparatus consists of a shaft (*a*) about three feet long, and a wooden hearth (*b*) which contains pits to receive the head of the drill. In use, the hearth is held under the foot, the Indian standing upright and twirling the drill between his palms. A bit of cotton in a plantain leaf is kept ready beside the hearth to catch the spark when 372

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372 generated, which requires only a few moments. Even those Indians who have modern appliances use the hand drill for lighting ceremonial fires.

[237] [412] *Fire Fans.*—Pl. XXIII, *b*, represents a type of feather fan, used chiefly to accelerate flame. They are composed of nine or ten feathers of a large bird, laid parallel and fastened together at the base by a split reed wrapping, in some cases reinforced with a binding of cotton or other fiber.

50 [439] *Canoes.*—Although the Bribri have "cayukas" obtained from foreigners, no canoes of native manufacture were found. A toy canoe, about three feet long, was observed in one settlement; this was fashioned from a log and pointed at both ends. Gabb states that even in his time the Bribri had no canoes of their own.

282 415 [171] *Leather Pouches.*—Pl. XXV, *b*, illustrates a crude leathern pouch used as a carrying bag; it closely resembles a common North American type.

534 *Musical Instruments.*—The drum is the most important musical instrument of the Bribri. In shape the common native instru-

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TYPES OF BRIBRI ARROWS

a, For small fish, length 6' 1"; *b*, Typical fish arrow, length 5' 7½"; *c*, War arrow, length 4' 11½"; *d*, Large game arrow with metal point, length 5' 1"; *e*, Small game arrow with blunt head, length 4' 5".

[Facing page 87]

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ment is three feet or less in length, and five or six inches in diameter at the head, narrowing toward the base (pl. XXVI), being constricted about six or seven inches from the bottom, then flaring slightly. Drums are hewn from a solid piece of wood, and fitted with a tight head of iguana-skin, which is shrunken over the large end and held in place with fiber cord glued on with dried blood. The drums are also furnished with a fiber rope for suspension. 534

At a *Chichara* festival one Indian was seen standing with a drum under his left arm and its carrying strap over his left shoulder, slapping the head of the drum with the open right palm. Beside him stood another Indian with his right arm about the drummer's shoulders. They danced with a skipping sidewise step, the drummer beating his instrument while the other thumped his chest in unison with the left hand. [482] [535]

This goblet-like form of drum is antique, as there is a specimen made of pottery, from an ancient grave, in the National Museum at San José. Unfinished drums of a shorter, double-headed, barrel-shaped vari- [172]

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534 ety were seen about the Bribri lodges. Pl. XXVII represents a specimen of this type, kindly presented to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, by Mrs Minor C. Keith.

Rattles (pl. XXV, *c*) are made of small, egg-shaped calabashes, carefully scraped to make them symmetrical, hollowed out, and canna seeds placed in the cavity. The gourd has several perforations drilled in one end, through which is passed twisted fiber cord by which it is attached to a handle made of a bird-bone. In this respect Bribri rattles differ from North American Indian [171] forms, in which the handle invariably passes through the gourd.

A notched stick was obtained, which seems to be identical with the ordinary Bribri bark-beater, but, according to Ramón it was rasped with a stick as an accompaniment, in addition to other musical instruments. The marimba is not found among the Bribri.

Gabb[15] says:

"To accompany the invigorating music of the drum and help the din, an armadillo skin is

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PL. XXV

[Facing p. 89]

BLOWGUN PELLETS OF CLAY; LEATHER POUCH; SHAMAN'S CALABASH RATTLE
(Length of the rattle, 7½ inches)

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sometimes used. This is scraped over the rings with a large hard bean-like seed. It at least helps to add to the noise, if it does not contribute melody. A little flute, about as musical as a penny whistle, is sometimes added to the concert, though it seems rather to be looked upon as a toy. These flutes are made of a bone of some bird, perhaps a pelican. The bone has half-a-dozen holes drilled in it, and the end is plugged with wax, so as to direct the air to the larger aperture near the end. I bought one from a Tiribi made of a deer's bone. 534

"On very solemn occasions a curious box is also used. It is about eight inches long by four square on the end. It is carved out hollow, with a long tongue on one face, isolated by a U-shaped slit. A heavy handle is attached to one end, also carved out of the same block. When used, it is simply struck on the above mentioned tongue with a bone or piece of hard stick. This is only used on the death of a chief. There is but one in the tribe, and no bribe that I could offer sufficed to buy it."

Cacique Sticks.—These are long, cane-like staves, made of a dark, hard, heavy, reddish-brown wood called "cacique". As a rule they are entirely plain, but pl. XVII, *b*, exhibits an example of a type, now said to be obsolete, that has the figure of a man rudely carved on the handle. These canes are highly regarded, because of certain 293 [532] [757]

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293 757 astringent properties said to be contained in the wood, and they are sometimes scraped and the scrapings drunk with water as a curative. It is supposed to stop bleeding, and is also valued for intestinal ailments. [622] Formerly they may have been the property only of the headmen.

293 A stick once owned by Ramón's father, the old "king," was in the custody of Señor Alejo Jimenez, governor of Talamanca, who lives at Saporio. It was taken by the Bribri from a neighboring tribe, probably the Tiribi, in war, many years ago, and the Indians are very anxious lest it should pass out of their hands, since they say, "it cost us blood." This staff was seen by Gabb,[16] who states:

[532] "It is a staff of hard black palm wood, over four feet long. The top is carved in the shape of an animal, not unlike a bear sitting on his haunches. But there are no bears in this country, and it must have been intended for some other animal. Below this figure the stick is square, and is carved out into four pillars several inches long, with spaces between them. In the interior, between them, is a cavity in which a loose piece of the same wood can be shaken about. It was evidently left there in the carv-

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[534]

DRUM WITH HEAD OF IGUANA-SKIN
(Height, 24 inches)

[Facing p. 92]

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Bribri

ing, after the fashion of the Chinese. Below this, the stick is plain. I tried every means in my power to obtain this, but could not buy it." 293

The stick, which was seen by the writer, is still unobtainable.

Gold Ornaments.—Pendants of gold were formerly worn as chiefs' insignia, and, it is said, were also given to successful partisans in the Tiribi war. They are now nearly a thing of the past, as the whites have long eagerly sought and purchased them. These ornaments were made in the form of eagles (sometimes double-headed), alligators, and frogs, and were worn as breast-plates or gorgets. They no doubt were entirely similar to the antique forms from the graves at Las Mercedes. Señor Ricardo Fernandez Guardia[17] reproduces a photograph of Antonio Saldaña, father of Ramón and last "king" of the Bribri, with several large gold eagles round his neck. These eagles are also noted by Gabb.[18] 301 [622]

As the Bribri believe that death will overtake the Indian owner who sells one of these gold ornaments, it may be that there are really more of them in existence than the 784. [763]

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784 natives will admit. This penalty may be avoided, however, by calling in the services of the nearest shaman, who removes the taboo, or *búkuru*, by blowing upon the object and singing certain songs to the accompaniment of his medicine rattle. The following day it may be handled and disposed of with impunity.

226 *Fish Traps.*—Fish are taken by blocking small tributaries of a river and stranding them, by shooting with arrows or catching them in traps. Unfortunately none of these processes was observed, but pl. XXIX reproduces a photograph of a tributary of Coen river across which a temporary dam had been made to divert the course of the stream and leave the fish high and dry.

481 At this point we may mention the Bribri method of crossing swollen streams by means of the ingenious device of weighting themselves with heavy stones borne on the shoulders (pl. XXX). The writer did not have the good fortune to witness this performance, but we are enabled to introduce the accompanying illustration through the

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DRUM WITH DOUBLE HEAD
(Height, 20 inches)

[facing p. 93]

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Bribri

courtesy of Professor Saville, from whose collection of prints it came. 481

Food.—Plantains are extensively used, and, eaten boiled, seem to form the staple diet of the Bribri. Bananas are also extensively eaten. According to Gabb,[19] the Indians roast green plantains as a substitute for bread, but when ripe they are roasted and eaten with chocolate, in order to sweeten the latter. They are also boiled green to eat with meat or corn. Ripe plantains are boiled, mashed, and mixed with equal quantities of corn-meal paste for cakes or chicha; sometimes this paste is diluted with water and made into a gruel. 262 252

Corn in a variety of colors is cultivated—red, white, blue, yellow, black, and purple. It is eaten when fresh, boiled in the ear; but it is generally dried, hulled, and ground to flour on a stone metate with a mano, or, as Gabb relates, on a flat slab from one of the buttresses of a ceiba tree, dressed smooth. The dry corn is soaked over night to soften it; it is then spread on the metate and crushed with the convex stone muller, which is rocked over it. The paste is then boiled,

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Bribri

252 and the mush, sweetened with boiled, ripe,
262 plantain paste, is made into cakes, rolled into plantain leaves, and baked in the ashes.

273 Chicha, the native intoxicant, is made from green corn bitten off the cob by the women and ejected into a calabash, the saliva aiding the process of fermentation. It was said that chicha is also made by chewing cakes of corn and plantain paste, and placing the resultant mass in an earthen kettle containing boiled corn.

262 Sugar-cane and beans of various kinds are raised to a slight extent, and the pith of the cabbage palm and nuts of the pejibalie palm are eaten. Gabb speaks of the use of a variety of greens, or spinach, made of certain tender leaves.

272 Cacao is constantly on hand in every lodge as a food or a drink. It is dried and fermented, roasted, pounded with mortar and muller, and then made into cakes or paste and thus eaten, or into a bitter but stimulating drink. In making chocolate,
415 the receptacle is a *jicara*, or a calabash, to contain the paste, which is held upright in an hourglass-shaped standard called *salvilla*

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PL. XXVIII

BRIBRI MEN FISHING

SKINNER—BRIBRI

[facing p. 92]

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Examples of these, in both stone and pottery, were found frequently in the graves at Las Mercedes. The stirring is done with a stick called *molinillo* (pl. XIX, *c*). 415

Meat is eaten fresh, either boiled or roasted, or is dried for future consumption. 251 262

CEREMONIES

Very few ceremonies are now performed by the Bribri, and of those that survive, most are mortuary in their function. None of these ceremonies were witnessed personally, but descriptions were obtained from Ramón, and from several other Indians whose identity was not learned, as these people have a form of the taboo against mentioning their names. A so-called "ceremony," *La Chichara*, which usually precedes an important undertaking, such as house-building, seems to be nothing more than a general chicha-drinking bout. 796 [784] [273]

Death Ceremonies.—When a Bribri is near death, he is removed from his house to a small hut set up at a distance from the camp, because if he should die in his lodge, 763

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Bribri

763 it must be burnt to destroy the influence of evil spirits, and the place must be abandoned. After the death, a certain officer
764 called the *oko* is called in, he being the only
[767] person who can handle the dead without being defiled. The *oko* wraps the corpse in bark blankets and plantain leaves, and places with it the hammock in which the deceased breathed his last, as well as any other household objects associated with him at death. The *oko* then removes the body to a small platform in the woods, surrounded by a fence built to keep out animals, and roofed with thatch. Some of the natives also declared that this scaffold is densely covered with thorny vines, trained to grow over it. In this temporary tomb the body remains for five years, when it is removed to the communal house of the dead.

Quenching the Fire.—Nine days after the death, a ceremony called *Apagando el fuego*, or "Quenching the Fire," is held, which lasts only one night. The women of the family prepare chicha, cacao, and other materials for a feast, and the *tsúku*,

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PL. XXIX.

SKINNER—BRIBRI

FISH-WEIR ON COEN RIVER

[facing p. 97]

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or "doctor," who "owns" the ritual for this rite, is summoned. When the *tsûku* appears, he sings certain secret songs, accompanied by the calabash rattle, without the aid of an assistant. He next makes a ceremonial fire, lighting it by means of a fire-drill rolled between the palms of his hands. The *tsûku* then scrapes some powder from a "caçique" stick and puts a pinch on various utensils which had belonged to the deceased and which are still in the house. At each application of powder he sings and shakes his rattle. Later he puts some of the powdered *caçique* in a package and places it on a wooden stool before him, while he sits on another seat and chants. When this rite is finished, the *tsûku* gets some water in plantain leaves and pours it on the fire, ending the ceremony. After this, say the Indians, the relatives of the dead "have no fear of the fire."

Bone Dance.—A ceremony called *Baile de los Huesos*, or "Bone Dance," is held five years after the corpse is put away on the little scaffold in the jungle, when the flesh is completely gone. The ceremony

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764 lasts from fifteen to twenty-two days. The family of the deceased spend all they can on the feast. Chicha and cacao are prepared in large quantities, and animals are killed. The *oko* who "owns" this function is sent for, and the *tsúku* is hired to sing, accompanied by two attendants. All three of these latter bear rattles, while various others, the number of whom is not specified, beat drums. All day long the *tsúku* and his attendants make music while the guests and mourners feast. On the last day all the guests leave, and the *oko* and the mourners remove the skeleton from its temporary grave in the woods and wrap it in a bark blanket. The bundle is carried out into the woods a short distance from the camp, where a private ceremony is held, of which details could not be gathered. After this rite the bones are taken to the dead-house, situated far off in the mountains.

346 764 This dead-house is made of a durable wood called *madera del campo santo*, "cemetery wood," which, even in the tropical jungles, is well-nigh imperishable. This

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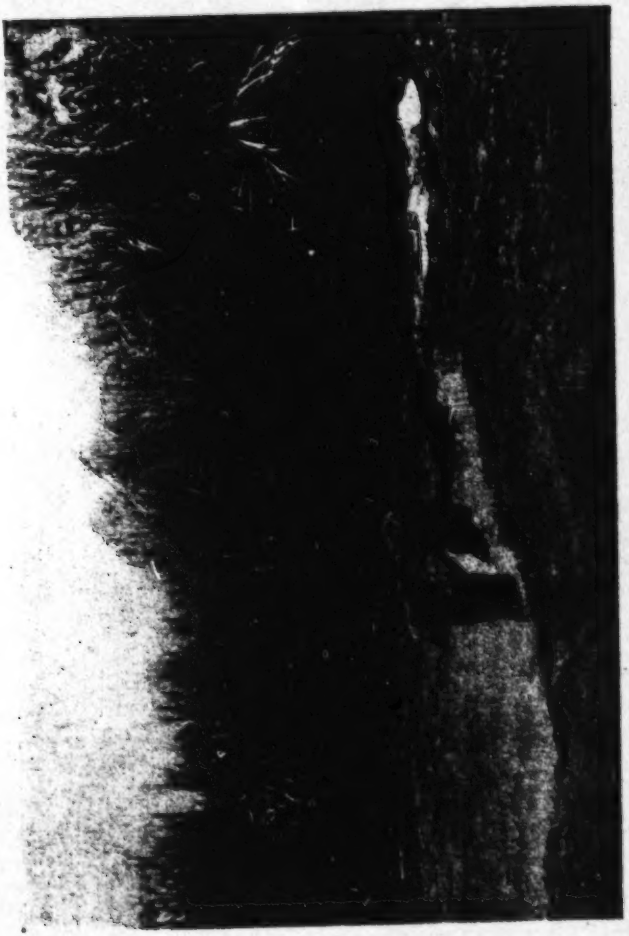
PL. XXX



BRIBRI METHOD OF CROSSING A STREAM

SKINNER—BRIBRI

facing p. 99

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Bribri

house, according to the informants, is divided into four rooms, each reserved for one of the four geographical groups of the Bribri, residing on the Lari, Tiliri, Uren, and Coen rivers—four upper tributaries of the Sixaola. The roof of the charnel house is not thatched; but it was not certain, from the description of the natives, whether it was otherwise roofed. What they said was that it is completely made of *madera del campo santo*, which may mean that the house has a puncheon roof. The bones of the dead are stored in the room appropriate to their local band, and with them are placed bows, arrows, and various utensils.

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Gabb,[30] who was able to witness the Bribri mortuary ceremonies personally, gives an excellent account, not differing materially from the data furnished by the writer's informants. He states that the funeral fire was kept burning for nine days, and during that time it could not be used for any purpose. At the end of the allotted period only the *tsâku* could extinguish it, and then with a calabash of chocolate. Gabb adds that instead of sacrificing the

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764 actual implements of the deceased, cacique-wood powder was placed on crude models of his property, including his golden eagle, and these were wrapped up in cotton wool and placed with the body, to symbolize his earthly possessions. The body was then enshrouded in a bark blanket and the dead man's hammock, and the whole enveloped in platanillo leaves, swung under a pole, and carried out to a previously prepared scaffold in the jungle.

The next of kin then commenced gathering material for the bone feast, and a year or less (not five years, as said by my informants) thereafter the ceremony was held. An official called *bikakra* took charge of the feast, and a party was sent to collect the bones. Here a specially appointed person, who was apparently absolved from the taint of touching the dead, opened the bundle, cleaned and rearranged the bones, and rewrapped them in a cloth of native make and decorated in an allegorical manner.

"These cloths," says Gabb, "about four feet long by two wide, are painted with a

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MASK AND DANCE DRESS COLLECTED BY W. M. GABB
(Courtesy of the U. S. National Museum)

[facing p. 10]

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red vegetable juice, in figures two to four inches long. The devices vary according to the cause of the death of the individual; whether it be from fever or other disease, old age, snake bite." 764

The bones were kept in the house on a rack of cane during the ceremony for two weeks or more. The final rites consisted of a ritualistic chant, by the shaman, describing the journey of the deceased to the other world, the dangerous rivers he had to cross, beset by alligators, by great serpents which lay in his path, and by fearful precipices. But the journey was not to be altogether dreadful, for beautiful birds, butterflies, and flowers were to be encountered, the song closing with a description of final arrival of the departed and reception in the Hereafter, where he would have nothing to do but eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy himself in the realm of the god *Sibú*. The fire was then extinguished, and the skeleton ceremonially conducted to its final resting place, amid a partial destruction of the property of the deceased, after which the bones were taken to the death house. 764 775 764

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766 "The warriors among the Bri-bris, who fought in the war with the Tiribris were honored with a little different ceremonial. They are now all gone, and the ceremony is extinct. At the death feast, a person entered, clad in a long gown, wig, and mask. The gown and wig were made of mastate, or bark cloth, covered with 'old man's beard moss,' sewed all over it, making a shaggy and nearly shapeless mass. The mask was made of half a 'tree calabash,' properly fixed up with a wax nose, &c. A copy of this entire dress was made for me by an old Indian, and is now in the Smithsonian Museum [pl. xxx]. The person thus accoutred, took part in the dance, made free with the women and scared the children without let or hindrance. Mothers with young children took them to him and placed them for a moment on his shoulder, 'to prevent the evil spirit from doing them harm.'"

784 *Tabu.*—On going into Bribri houses we frequently were earnestly warned by the Indians not to handle certain objects, as they were *bukurû* or tabu. On inquiry it was learned that it was customary for an Indian who wished to leave home to pronounce certain charms over his valuables, which then became *bukurû*, or tabu, not only to others but to himself, until a shaman was summoned to remove the spell by blowing upon them and singing to the time of his

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sacred rattle. Thus we were sometimes obliged to wait several days until the tabu was removed before we could buy various objects. This removal, of course, required that the shaman be paid a fee, sometimes equaling or exceeding the price we paid for the object. We were also given to understand that some forms of *bukurú* were limited as to time, and expired automatically at the end of a fixed number of days after the charm was pronounced, without the aid of the shaman. Several times, blowguns which had their orifices stuffed with feathers or down were observed, apparently to indicate that they were tabu. Small objects were also placed in hollow bamboo tubes and the ends closed with feathers in order to safeguard them.

Gabb[21] seems to have gathered a somewhat different idea, for he says:

"There are two classes of uncleanness, *nya* and *bu-ku-ru'*. Anything that is essentially filthy or that was connected with the death of a person is '*nya*,' anything unclean in the Hebraic or Hindu sense is *bu-ku-ru'* . . . . *Bu-ku-ru'* emanates in a variety of ways; arms, utensils, even houses become affected by it after long

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783 disuse and before they can be used again must be purified. In the case of portable objects left undisturbed for a long time, the custom is to beat them with a stick before touching them . . . . A house long unused must be swept and then the person who is purifying it must take a stick and beat not only the movable objects, but the beds, posts, and in short, every accessible part of the interior. The next day, it is fit for occupation. A place not visited for a long time or reached for the first time is *bu-ku-ru'* . . . .

843 783 But the worst *bu-ku-ru'* of all, is that of a young woman in her first pregnancy. She infects the whole neighborhood. Persons going from the house where she lives, carry the infection with them to a distance, and all the deaths or serious misfortunes in the vicinity are laid to her charge. In the old times, when the savage laws and customs were in full force, it was not an uncommon thing for the husband of such a woman to be obliged to pay damages for casualties thus caused by his unfortunate wife. *Nya* (literally

783 filth) is a much less serious affair. As soon as the woman is delivered of her child, she ceases to be *bu-ku-ru'*, but becomes *nya* and has to be purified in the manner described. All the objects that have been in contact with a person just dead, are *nya* and must be either thrown away, destroyed, or purified by a 'doctor.' He can handle them, but must purify himself afterwards. The persons who assist in preparing the corpse, who carry it to the temporary resting-place, or who even accidentally touch it or the unclean things, are all *nya* and must be purified.

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"Purification from this latter uncleanness is a simple matter. The person washes his hands in a calabash of warm water, the 'doctor' blows a few whiffs of tobacco smoke over him, and the thing is done. But the former is more serious. For three days the patient eats no salt in his food, drinks no chocolate, uses no tobacco, and if a married man, sleeps apart from his wife. At the expiration of that time, the warm water and tobacco smoke are called into requisition and the cleansing is complete." 783

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